

# Blue Cross® VIRTUAL WELL-BEING

## Digital Detox at Home

The average adult consumes five times more information every day than his or her counterparts did 30 years ago. In 2016, the Nielson Company audience report revealed that adults in the U.S. spend nearly 11 hours each day consuming media through tablets, smart phones, personal computers, multimedia devices, video games, radios, TVs, DVDs and DVRs. Because of all this focus on digital devices, the way we interact with one another and the world around us is evolving. And, research suggests that time on social media shows measurable, causal differences in our mental health.



Research by the Braun Research Center and Bank of America has shown that a screen or technology addiction affects the same area of the brain as drugs and alcohol. Signs of a severe screen addiction include:

- Depression and suicidal thoughts, as well as emerging mental health disorders
- Stressed or fractured relationships with friends and family
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Erratic and disorganized behavior
- Inability to focus or complete tasks

For children, unstructured playtime is more valuable for their developing brains than electronic media. Children younger than age 2 are more likely to learn and remember information from a live presentation than they are from a video, but by age 2, children can benefit from some types of screen time. However, too much screen time has been linked to:

- Obesity
- Irregular sleep schedules
- Behavioral problems
- Loss of social skills
- Violence
- Less play time

A digital detox can be beneficial to your and your family's well-being. While it's not realistic to completely give up electronic devices, there are ways you can carve out tech-free times every day. Lay down some ground rules based on what's realistic, and start small. Here are some ideas:

- Swear off your most-used social media app for a week.
- Turn off notifications during work hours.
- Always ask "why" when you pull out your phone.
- Swear off screens after dark.
- Change your notifications so your phone isn't constantly pinged.
- Have a family media plan.

Once you've begun implementing your digital detox plan, reward yourself with some tech-free fun.

- Treat yourself to a new magazine or book.
- Listen to your favorite podcast or music (with your phone on airplane mode).
- Take a hike, a bike ride or run outside.
- Try a yoga class to focus on mindfulness and being in the moment.
- Try mindful coloring.

Sources: [healthline.com](http://healthline.com)\*, [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)\*, [hrdailyadvisor.blr.com](http://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com)\*, [rewire.org](http://rewire.org)\*, [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)\*, [psychologytoday.com](http://psychologytoday.com)\*, [growtheengineering.co.uk](http://growtheengineering.co.uk)\*, [annenberg.usc.edu](http://annenberg.usc.edu)\*

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